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**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill No. 349,
An Act Concerning the Use of Body-Worn Recording Equipment
By Law Enforcement**

Good afternoon Senator Coleman, Representative Tong, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is David McGuire. I am the Legislative and Policy Director at the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT), and I am here to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 349, An Act Concerning the Use of Body-Worn Recording Equipment by Law Enforcement. In Connecticut, we have enough experience with this technology to know that with appropriate standards and safeguards in place, body cameras serve as a powerful mechanism for police oversight. We also recognize that this type of equipment has the ability to impede upon the privacy of citizens. The ACLU-CT appreciates the caution and concern for privacy and safety that motivated this bill but disagrees with the bill's proposed pathway toward protecting minors.

Recording police encounters using police body cameras will promote police accountability, deter officer and civilian misconduct, and provide objective evidence to help resolve complaints against police without significantly infringing on officers' or residents' privacy. At a time of heightened tensions surrounding police, body cameras can also help to restore the public's trust in law enforcement.

While police body cameras can protect both the public and police officers from misrepresentations about police encounters, Connecticut also needs guidelines to protect the privacy of all of those whose images are captured by the cameras. This is especially important when applied to minors, including schoolchildren. Although this bill seeks to protect minors' privacy rights, it would do so at the expense of the very purpose of body cameras: increasing police transparency and oversight. The bill is misguided in its effort to deem police body camera recordings to be confidential under the Freedom of Information Act, as it would hinder police accountability efforts.

For these reasons, the ACLU-CT believes that rather than exempt recordings of minors from public view, recordings should instead be edited to remove minors' identifying features. This could be accomplished, for instance, by blurring faces and/or altering voices. This solution would protect children's privacy while still allowing for police transparency and oversight.

Several cases of extreme police brutality in schools prove that oversight is pivotal in order to protect minors. In October 2015, for instance, a police officer in South Carolina was caught on camera slamming

a teenage girl to the ground and dragging her out of the classroom. In addition to arresting the girl on video, police also arrested her classmate for recording the situation. Had this recording been considered confidential information, the public would not have had access to the video, and the officer's actions may have gone unpunished. Likewise, if the officer had been wearing a body camera, perhaps the girl's classmate would not have been the only person recording the incident, and her video evidence would not have been the only footage with which to analyze the officer's actions.

Closer to home, an incident at Middletown High School also demonstrates the need for open records that include video footage from police body cameras. In 2011, a school resource officer Tased a student five times after the child engaged in an argument with a cafeteria employee. Again, with proper and publicly available body camera footage of the incident, the student could more easily seek justice in court to hold the officer accountable for his actions, just as the officer could more easily respond to false allegations of misconduct.

In order to defend minors from potential police brutality, it is imperative that recordings from police body-worn equipment are accessible and available to the public. Children are some of the most vulnerable members of our society, and so we should strive to protect them from police brutality and privacy violations, not one or the other. This bill, however, would serve one at the expense of the other. By instead protecting minors' privacy through voice alteration and image blurring while keeping recordings from police body cameras accessible, we can more effectively do just that.

I encourage you to oppose Senate Bill 349.